



East Central Idaho News

BONNEVILLE, BUTTE, CLARK, CUSTER, FREMONT, JEFFERSON, LEMHI, MADISON & TETON COUNTIES

ECONOMIC TRENDS

The unemployment rate for Idaho Falls Metropolitan Statistical Area increased one-tenth of a percentage point over the month to 2.6 percent for February as seen in East Central Idaho Table 1. Year-over-year, the unemployment rate decreased six-tenths of a percentage point. The year-over-year decrease comes with an increase of 3,700 people working, higher than the increase in the number of people looking for work. With population increasing steadily in the two-county area and new businesses continually springing up, the region seems to be maintaining balance. Individually, Bonneville County posted a rate of 2.6 percent while Jefferson County was at 2.8 percent. Idaho Falls, the largest city in the metropolitan area, showed a rate of 3 percent, the same as the previous month and down half a percentage point from the same time last year.

While all the rural counties except Fremont in the larger east central Idaho area saw their unemployment rates increase slightly over the month, those nine counties posted lower rates than a year earlier with Custer, Lemhi and Clark counties showing the largest decreases at over a full percentage point each. Madison and Teton counties were the lowest at 2.1 percent and 2.3 percent, respectively. Winter and spring-like weather took turns hitting the area over the past four months, allowing more construction activities than normal. Resort and mountain areas received plenty of snow and had good skiing seasons. Also, consumer confidence is relatively strong, helping to fuel the robust economy in most counties.

East Central Idaho Table 1: Idaho Falls MSA Labor Force & Employment
Bonneville and Jefferson counties

	Feb 2006*	Jan 2006	Feb 2005	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
Seasonally Adjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	63,610	61,850	60,180	2.8	5.7
Unemployment	1,670	1,570	1,900	6.4	-12.1
% of Labor Force Unemployed	2.6	2.5	3.2		
Total Employment	61,940	60,280	58,280	2.8	6.3
Unadjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	62,350	61,050	59,180	2.1	5.4
Unemployment	2,160	2,090	2,450	3.3	-11.8
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.5	3.4	4.1		
Total Employment	60,190	58,960	56,730	2.1	6.1
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs** - NAICS	52,990	52,590	46,280	0.8	14.5
Goods-Producing Industries	6,890	6,930	6,140	-0.6	12.2
Natural Resources & Mining	30	30	40	0.0	-25.0
Construction	3,660	3,660	3,050	0.0	20.0
Manufacturing	3,200	3,240	3,050	-1.2	4.9
Food Manufacturing	1,110	1,130	1,010	-1.8	9.9
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	210	220	210	-4.5	0.0
Machinery Manufacturing	150	140	160	7.1	-6.3
Other Manufacturing	1,730	1,750	1,670	-1.1	3.6
Service-Providing Industries	46,100	45,660	40,140	1.0	14.8
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	13,220	13,210	12,650	0.1	4.5
Wholesale Trade	4,180	4,120	3,840	1.5	8.9
Retail Trade	7,420	7,460	7,290	-0.5	1.8
Utilities	50	50	50	0.0	0.0
Transportation	1,570	1,580	1,470	-0.6	6.8
Information	1,150	1,130	1,130	1.8	1.8
Financial Activities	2,090	2,100	1,970	-0.5	6.1
Professional & Business Services	9,710	9,530	5,230	1.9	85.7
Educational & Health Services	6,870	6,820	6,380	0.7	7.7
Leisure & Hospitality	4,260	4,250	4,020	0.2	6.0
Other Services	2,010	1,940	1,980	3.6	1.5
Government Education	3,660	3,560	3,580	2.8	2.2
Government Administration	3,130	3,120	3,200	0.3	-2.2

*Preliminary Estimate

**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

AREA DEVELOPMENTS

Bonneville County

- Taylor Crossing on the River, the professional-retail-business development on the Snake River, will see more growth this year than all the years to this point. Besides announcing the opening of a second Sizzler in Idaho Falls by the end of the year, McNeil Development will also bring in a second Bajio Grill, a steakhouse, fish restaurant and pizzeria. Mountain View hospital just announced it is

going to lease space in the development for several medical facilities. An urgent care center will likely open within the next three months followed by an imaging center and “executive” clinic similar to a doctor timeshare where physicians can lease offices during the week. The development company is currently breaking ground on a 20,000 square-foot reception and conference center by the river. A high-tech conference center in the lower level will have fiber optics capable of simulcasting to remote locations. Work could start on a hotel in the fall. All this is in addition to the nine buildings already constructed or being built amid breathtaking waterways and splashing fountains. Not bad for a couple of farmers who started out with a vision.

- The Southern Belle Bake Shoppe is now in Idaho Falls. Louisiana native owner Cindy Head moved to the area with her husband three years ago with a dream to share her great southern delectables. All her baked goods are made from scratch including her specialty pecan bars and pecan pralines.
- It’s official. The Olive Garden is being built in Idaho Falls near the Interstate 15 exit where JB’s previously stood. Site plans have been received by the city and should be approved by May. This is a deal that has been in the works for at least three years. This section of town was once industrial, and developments over the past year have been changing that look. Olive Garden will finish out the corner lot that is now just dirt next to the Fairfield Inn and Super Wal-Mart, leading into Taylor Crossing on the River.
- The Idaho Falls Regional Airport announced that in June United Airlines will partner with Skywest to offer direct flights twice a day to Denver. Demand is high for this since a contractor for the Idaho National Laboratory has offices in Denver. This flight will eliminate a plane change or layover in Salt Lake City. A \$500,000 Small Community Air Service grant received last year helped make the flight available. Just last year, the airport received two new carriers; Allegiant Air offering direct flights to Las Vegas and Northwest Pinnacle Airlink with direct flights to Minneapolis.
- Construction continues at a galloping pace. Bonneville County residents spent \$325 million building homes and commercial buildings in 2005, up 32 percent from the previous year. Permits increased 13.9 percent to 3,390 over the same

time period. Costs for construction have risen dramatically over the past few years. Steel prices were up 4.2 percent, plastics up 20.6 percent, cement 12.3 percent and gypsum wallboard up 15.3 percent from 2004 to 2005. A house that cost \$100,000 a year ago would likely have gone up to \$135,000 or more now. Cement is on a backorder list for up to two weeks due to heavy demand following last year’s hurricanes and China’s expanding economy. But increases have done little to slow the pace of construction. Continued low interest rates and affordable properties keep contractors going strong. New subdivisions are being started while others are expanding. Younger couples and out-of-staters who have discovered the area are leading the buyers along with the locals who just want a change.

Madison County

- The Madison School District is using money from the \$1.1 million annual plant facility levy passed last year by taxpayers to add bathrooms and classrooms to Lincoln Elementary, the fastest-growing area of the school district. Several additional projects are in the works for the district that has averaged a growth of 75 students a year for the past four years and has already added 60 students during the first quarter of this year. Burton Elementary will be getting a new building, remodeling will be done at Lyman Elementary, additions are going in at Archer Elementary and many maintenance projects will be completed.
- Sugar City lost its biotech company to Logan, Utah. Caisson Laboratories merged with Apomyx, Inc. two years ago and the move finalized the merger. Caisson, known as Gemini since the merger, produces micropropagation fertilizer that enhances the cloning of plants and helps produce basic animal tissues. A plant could be cloned from a piece of leaf or an organ could be grown from a sample of animal tissue. Major markets are India, Canada and South Korea. The company had outgrown its Sugar City location. It moved from a 1,600 square-foot building to a 10,000 square-foot building and was under the same roof as its sister company. Three of the 12 employees moved with the company.

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